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FACULTY PROFILE

Susan Miskelly

Professor Susan Miskelly, Bridgewater State's Associate Professor of Speech Communication and Coach of the Forensic Team, is in the business of building courage and self-confidence; courage to stand up in front of an audience and self-confidence to engage in vigorous debate and competitive speaking.

Since 1969, Professor Miskelly has been honing the debating and public speaking skills of hundreds of Bridgewater undergraduates. During those years she has watched as her students developed into self-assured and articulate debaters capable of quickly responding to difficult questions, challenging the positions of their opponents and presenting clear and concise arguments.

Professor Miskelly is passionate about debate and her involvement with the Forensic Team. She sees her work as not just teacher/coach but also the head of a traveling family since debate requires frequent trips away from campus to attend debate competitions. This spring, for example, she was off to Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois with three students who qualified for the National Forensic Championship Tournament. Besides the trip to Illinois, Professor Miskelly has taken her team, which is approximately twenty students, to competitions at Suffolk University, Northeastern University, Plymouth State

College in New Hampshire, and Longwood College in Virginia. During those competitions Professor Miskelly's students faced teams from local colleges and universities such as Emerson and Harvard.

Professor Miskelly feels that besides the development of communication skills and a competitive spirit, participation in the Forensic Team builds solid research capabilities. Students must immerse themselves in a wide range of topics in



order to be effective speakers and debaters. This year the debate topic concerns the issue of whether the United Nations should be reorganized and should redefine its mission. In past years, topics included welfare reform and the immigration crisis.

What Professor Miskelly takes the greatest pride in is the success that her Forensic Team has achieved over the years. At a competition last semester the team came in second to West Point, while outdistancing Harvard, the University of Rhode Island, Simmons College and Northeastern University. Such success against larger and more well recognized schools has helped Bridgewater students realize that they have the ability to compete successfully on a national level.

After years of experience, Professor Miskelly has been able to convey the message to her students that success in debate is a combination of extensive research, long practice sessions and regular critiques. She has mastered the technique of pushing the students to compile the necessary research and perfecting their speaking style with hours of practice and critique. Increasingly, Professor Miskelly utilizes videotaping of debate practice sessions as a valuable tool of critique.

Because Professor Miskelly is such a dedicated champion of debate she dreams of a time when the College might expand the interest and the opportunities for the Forensic Team. To help achieve these goals she has submitted a bid to host the regional Pi Kappa Delta tournament at the College in 1998. Pi Kappa Delta is the national honorary forensic fraternity, which has an undergraduate and alumni chapter at Bridgewater. Professor Miskelly also would like to see new faculty added in the area of speech communications in order to further strengthen the forensic offerings.

But although Professor Miskelly's sites are on the future, she takes great pride in the accomplishments of her former students. Many Bridgewater competitors have gone on to successful careers in business, law and education. Many of these same students returned last year for a 25th reunion of the Forensic Team. All the graduates talked about the impact that debate had on preparing them for their careers and all were in agreement that Professor Susan Miskelly helped them build their courage and their self-confidence.